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'KELUARGA BERENCANA'

RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

2nd Pastoral Letter

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(Translation)

PASTORAL LETTER ON FAMILY PLANNING

Introduction

To the most reverend clergy. members of the religious orders and faithful people of the Dioceses of Dili:

Health and Peace in Jesus Christ !

1. It is generally known that the national family planning programme of the Republic of Indonesia is being carried out in Timor. The objective of this Government programme is to form "small, happy and prosperous families"*. On the other hand, the Government takes the teachings of each of the religions into consideration. The national guidelines (GBHN) of 1983 affirm: " It is necessary that the whole process of family planning is based on the religions and the believes of the population" (GBHN-hal.26)*. Through its national development programme, the Government has the intention to "create the Indonesian man throughout the whole Indonesian population" (GBHN,IIA)* For this reason the Government presents the family planning programme relating it to the problem of demography.

2. In Timor, a territory which is not part of the regions in which the Government family planning programme is obligatory, functionaries of this programme,on the level of the province as well as on the level of the districts, carry out efforts in order to implement the national programme. Concrete informations received by the Bishop say that this kind of family planning programme only consists of going through the villages and little settlements distributing indiscriminately contraceptives (pills, injections and others). The agents of the programme do not give any previous information to the population and do not respect the Christian conscience of the Timorese, the majority of them being Catholic (438.000 Catholics). These agents also do not care for the teachings of the Catholic Church and its norms. For this reason,feelings of fear and discomfort are growing among the Christians. On top of everything it is being told (by the Indonesians) everywhere that the Church in Timor is against the family planning programme. I publish this second pastoral letter on the family planning programme in order to give an orientation and to clarify the doubts of the faithful members of the Church

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Translated from Bahasa Indonesia

CHAPTER I - FAMILY PLANNING

In Bahasa Indonesia it is called "Keluarga Berencana". In Portuguese we say "PLaneamento Familiar" and in English it is called "Family Planning". Keluarga Berencana, Planeamento Familiar or Family Planning is not the same thing as birth control. Family planning means to achieve conditions so that the family (parents and children) can find material and spiritual happiness and prosperity. Family planning means that husband and wife agree to plan a family according to the spirit of Vatican Council II.

"In their duty to transmit life and to be educators, husband and wife know that they are cooperating with God, the Creator, as his interpreters. For this reason they must fulfill their mission with all their human and Christian responsibility and with respect filled with docility towards God ; by mutual consent and resolution, husband and wife will make the right judgement, taking into account their own well-being and that of the children, of those born already and those still to be born; they will analyse the material and spiritual conditions of their time and their situation; finally, they will also take into account the well-being of the community, the necessities of temporal society and of the Church" (GS,50).

To plan means to take all the given conditions into account: the number of children, their well-being and education, the conjugal love and the faithfulness of husband and wife; the economic possibilities and the well-being of society and the Church. Therefore, for us Catholics, to plan means to be CONSCIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTS.

Under these guidelines, family planning does not mean to have only two children or to use contraceptives.

1.1 RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

We have two sources of inspiration: Vatican Council II and the encylic of Pope Paul VI, called Humanae Vitae (on Human Life).

Vatican II laid down the characteristics and necessities of conjugal love: Conjugal love is human and personal ("it is love from person to person and it is at the same time sensitive and spiritual"); it is redeemed (perfected by Christ); it is free and mutual, it is total, faithful and exclusive; it is fertile in a responsible manner. (Cfr. GS,49)

According to GS,50, fertility and responsible parenthood presuppose the capacity and the right to determine the number of children according to the conscience of the parents. There is the obligation to form the conscious according to the law of God which is authentically being interpreted by the teachings of the Church, taking into account the well-being of husband and wife, the children, society and the Church.

Fertility and responsible parenthood also presuppose spiritual factors such as faith, the eternal destiny of the children, their religious education and the building of the domestic Church.

They also presuppose temporal factors such as health, income and housing.

The encyclic Humanae Vitae clarifies the question of birth control:
Responsible parenthood means: "Knowledge and respect" regarding "biological processes"; subordination of instinct and passion to reason and will; carefully pondered decision on creating a large family (here we do not refer to the question of having only two children) or on having major intervals between the births of the children or on avoiding to have children at all. (Cfr. HV,10).

1.2 BIRTH CONTROL

Responsible parenthood demands knowledge of "the laws and natural rhythms of fertility" (HV,11). According to the wise and Christian birth control, Catholic parents are aware of the fact that the conjugal act, even if it is not procreative and as long as it is not being inspired by egotism or hedonism, is honest, honourable, perfective and fertile" (GS,49). On the other hand "marriage and conjugal love are established by nature itself for procreation and the education of the children" (GS,50). That is why marriage has to be open to the transmission of life (HV,11), because God wants the uniting and the procreating meanings of the conjugal act to be united (HV,12). The uniting objective (which unites husband and wife profoundly) and the procreative objective (which enables husband and wife to generate new life) cannot be separated. These principles should guide Christian couples when they choose a method of birth control.

CHAPTER II - BIRTH CONTROL

Regarding birth control we distinguish between natural and artificial "methods".

1. Natural methods are defined on the base of knowledge and respect for the biological process.
2. Artificial methods depend on a positive intervention of man who changes the biological process with the objective of infertility (contraception).

1. The natural methods are: Ogino Knaus, temperatures (thermic cycle) and the method of clycose.
2. The artificial methods can be divided into mechanical and chemical methods.
   a) The mechanical methods are:
      preservatives and masturbation, used by men
      diafragmas, cervical caps, vaginal washings and intra-uterine devices(IUD), used by women.
   b) The chemical methods are:
      spermaticides (suppositories, jellies, foam) or they can be hormonal (for example the pill). The hormonal contraceptives can be used orally (through the mouth) or can be injected.

Which are the methods that should be used by the Christians in our dioceses of Dili ?
Before I will reply to this question I would like to present

the thoughts of the Church on this matter:

1.0 It is morally licit to have recourse to the infertile periods.
If there are serious motifs, resulting from physical or psychological conditions lived by the couple or that result from exterior circumstances, for major intervals between the births of the children, then, according to the teachings of the Church, it is licit to take into account the natural rhythms of the generative functions and to let the conjugal act take place during the periods of infertility in order to control the births... ((HV,16).

Besides the recourse to infertile periods, we recommend in the Dioceses of Dili the above mentioned natural methods.
The position of the Church (according to the teachings of the encyclic Humanae Vitae) on artificial methods, that are the ones most widely spread in Timor, is:

1. "We must declare that the direct interruption of the generative process and specially the intended abortion, even if therapeutical, are absolutely to be exluded as legitimate means of birth control".
2. Direct sterilization, be it perpetual or temporary, of men or of women, has to be exluded in the same way.
3. "Every action before the conjugal act, while it is taking place or during the development of its natural consequences, that has the aim or is the means of turning procreation impossible, is to be exlucded". (Cfr. HV,14).

This means that all contraceptives are morally illicit.

Concerning this aspect the Council has used hard words against abortion and infanticide: "Abortion and infanticide are hateful crimes" (GS,51). In order to avoid ambiguities, the Council insists on the obligation of preserving the life of the children from the moment of conception on.
Therefore the Council condemns as abortive all those mechanical or chemical means that prevent the fixation of the already fertilized ovulum.
"Regarding birth control the children of the Church, who are faithful to its principles, are not allowed to use means of which the teachings of the Church, explaining divine law, disapprove" (GS,51).
We appeal to all the Catholics of our beloved dioceses to form their consciousness well, at this present moment in which many moral problems surge in Timor.

CHAPTER III - ANSWERS GIVEN BY THE CHURCH IN DILI TO 4 QUESTIONS THAT WERE PUT BY TIMORESE CHRISTIANS

1. Is it a sin to follow Keluarga Berencana (Indonesian family planning programme) ?
2. Which method should we use ?
3. Is it obligatory to have two children (2 boys or 2 girls would be the same...)*
4. Does the Church in Timor accept the Government Programme or is it against it ?

* Translated from Bahasa Indonesia

Answers and clarifications

1. Is it a sin to follow Keluarga Berencana ?

If we follow the family planning as it is proposed by the Church, that is responsible parenthood, then we only contribute to the perfection of the work of creation. If we make use of the contraceptives that the agents of Keluarga Berencana in Timor distribute, then we do not act in agreement with the norms of Christian moral. The Keluarga Berencana of the Government may have positive points. Let us make use of these positive points and let us abandon those points that contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church.

2. Which method should we use ?

Before even putting the question of which method or which contraceptive to use, husband and wife should ask themselves before God and before their conscience, that ought to be Christian,:"Should we or should we not have another child ?" The two will have to take an extremely grave and complex decision. Objective factors will have to be considered: The health of the mother, the conjugal harmony, the health of the children, the economic resources. Once a decision has been taken in a conscious and responsible way, the question of the use of this or that method is secondary. As a clarification to all Christians we recommend the use of natural methods, which should be decided by the couple's mutual consent and which should be applied under medical assistance by a physician or a Catholic nurse or at least by someone who is deontologically conscious.

3. Is it obligatory to have two children ?

Only the couple knows the possibilities of health, fortune, generosity or the possibilities of feeding and educating the children. The couple must have the responsibility to determine the number of children it thinks of having. We often hear "Keluarga kecil dan bahagia". But nowhere in the world it has been proven scientifically that a family with only two children is more prosperous and happier than a family with six children. Therefore I would like to call the attention of the Christians to two aspects: 1. There are advantages for a large and equilibrated family. Conjugal love that does not postulate the community of life would not be an authentically human love and much less a Christian love. The one who loves, wants to give himself. And love wants to be eternal, it wants to perpetuate itself. When fertility is refused, then the deepest and most meaningful parts of the self are destroyed. Therefore the children should be received with happiness. They are the materialization and perpetuation of the love of husband and wife and of the parents. This is the basic truth which resides in the deepest longings of the Timorese. To have children. And when they do not have children, then they do not feel fulfilled. In this case the simple mountain people feel the need of a second marriage.

2. There is inconvenience for families with only 1 (one) child or with 2 (two) children. The solution of one child only is censurable, except in very rare cases (for example the danger of death for the mother). This is the time in which we should remember the despair and sadness of many parents who have lost their only child or who always live in the fear of losing it. The same can be said, although to a lesser degree, of families with only two children.

Having explained these two aspects, I would like to ask the Christians to avoid two mistakes :
- The grave mistake of having too many children, without having possibilities to feed, dress, educate and arrange work for them, leaving them in sickness, hunger and promiscuity. That is why there is a necessity for family planning or keluarga berencana.
- Another mistake is to have only one or two children, locking oneself up in egotism and making princes or idols of the child or the two children. In Timor there are so many orphans who deserve the charity of the Christians and there are the needs of large families that demand the courage of others to adopt a boy or a girl. There are examples of this among Timorese families and we praise these heroic acts of charity and spiritual parenthood.

4. Does the Church in Timor accept the Government programme or is it against it ?

Here it is necessary to distinguish between two things:
The true keluarga berencana, that is contained in the "general guidelines for the whole country"* and that is to be carried out by the "coordinating department of national family planning".* And the keluarga berencana that is "dissimulated", which is being carried out by the agents in the villages and little settlements throughout Timor.
Regarding the national programme the following can be affirmed: "The family planning programme has to take the will expressed in religions and in believes into account".*
Proceeding from this assumption we accept what is positive and reject what contradicts the Catholic doctrine.
The Keluarga Berencana that, as we know, is being practiced in Timor, consists simply of distributing pills to ignorant people or to give injections to unaware women with the intention to "conquer the largest number possible of people."
We do not approve of this kind of Keluarga Berencana.
We lament, we disagree and we disapprove of a Keluarga Berencana, that does not inform the people, does not care for the Christian conscience of the majority of the Timorese people who are Catholic, and that does not have minimal consideration for the doctrines of the Catholic Church and the orientations given by the Dioceses of Dili.
That is why it is not the Catholic Church in Timor that systematically opposes Keluarga Berencaca, but the functionaries who misrepresent the true range of the national Keluarga Berencana.

* Translated from Bahasa Indonesia

CHAPTER IV - APPEAL

I launch an appeal to all my brothers in priesthood, asking them not to get tired of defending the truth. Let us be true counselors of the Christian families, friends of the sinners, but firm and intransigent with sin.

I appeal to the members of the religious orders to pray with their religious consagration for the Christian families and to be witnesses of chastity and service for the Kingdom of Heaven.

I appeal to the bridegrooms and brides and to the married couples: The vocation to marriage is a gift of God. It is one of the most beautiful vocations. The wish of the present pastoral letter is that the Christian families in Timor may be the "school of the richest humanism" (GS,52), basic cell of society, "Church in miniature" and "a kind of domestic Church" (LG,11).

Dili, March 3, 1985

Signature
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